

Dr. Peterson

Brookings Global Cities Initiative Private Dinner

Tuesday, March 19, 2013, ECCO, 40 7th Street NE

On behalf of Georgia Tech, welcome to Atlanta. The Global Cities Initiative aligns perfectly with Georgia Tech: we are a global university with students from 127 countries. More than 40% of our undergraduates have an international experience before they graduate, and Georgia Tech is engaged in global partnerships in research, education, and logistics.

We also partner with the City of Atlanta in numerous ways. A great example can be found just down the street. Technology Square is the east side of Tech's campus. Georgia Tech is taking a leading role in creating an innovation district, partnering with the Midtown Alliance, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the city of Atlanta, the Chamber of Commerce, and business and industry.

(Recent *USA Today* story on Atlanta's aspirations to be the Silicon South. Now #12.) Helping us move to the top 10 is El2.

Georgia Tech faculty, staff, and students have long been involved in efforts to positively impact communities that border the west side of our campus. These efforts have included: faculty research in urban planning; career fairs run by our Community Relations staff; student volunteering with neighborhood clean-ups and one-to-one tutoring/mentoring; our Semester in the City course (now in its eighth year) in which honors students explore the history and politics of English Avenue, a historic west side neighborhood; and many other initiatives.

One of the great challenges facing us in the coming years is how to build and maintain sustainable and resilient cities. For several years now, people have recognized the critical and expanding role of global cities.

Global Cities serve as the engines behind national and regional economic

growth. Some scholars have even argued that global cities constitute *the most important* interconnected network of economic, cultural, and social ties and relationships---a network far more critical to understanding and engaging the challenges of the 21st century than the national boundaries that set the stage in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Cities, however, are inherently complex. And in that complexity lies much of their resilience. Cities are dynamic places with diverse communities. Each city has its own unique quirks and its own embedded set of norms and values---its own peculiar way of “getting things done.” As a consequence, purely technical solutions to urban challenges have never measured up to the promises of their adherents.

The diffusion of urban innovations takes projects like this one---aimed at building dialogue, fostering relationships, and sharing knowledge about what works and equally what does not.

Whether the challenge is developing new financial models for infrastructure investment as in Chicago, figuring out how to deploy public transit in low-density environments as in Denver, building and export-oriented urban economy in a 21st century world as in Atlanta, or finding ways to reinvest in neighborhoods and communities overlooked or underappreciated by previous generations, it will take diverse stakeholders within and across cities collaborating on innovative solutions to a wide array of interdisciplinary challenges.

Georgia Tech is looking forward to partnering with stakeholders within our own global cities in the U.S. as well as with cities across the globe in confronting the challenge of building sustainable and resilient regions.